



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/giving-livestock-feed-boost-ethiopia>

Giving Livestock Feed a Boost in Ethiopia



USDA

Bekelech Alemu, a member of the Bokoji Cooperative, raises forage for her dairy cows.

Raising livestock is a major source of economic activity in Ethiopia. The country's livestock population is the largest in Africa and contributes to the livelihoods of 60-70 percent of Ethiopia's population. Ninety percent of crop production is dependent on animal draft power. Therefore, producing a high quantity and quality of feed for animals is a key factor in raising healthy and productive livestock and sustaining agriculture.

Through Feed the Future, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has supported a [Food for Progress](#) program to improve food security and the standard of living for Ethiopian families who depend on livestock for their livelihoods. The program, begun in 2009 and implemented by [ACDI/VOCA](#), has taken a multifaceted approach to improving animal feed throughout the country.

One important part of raising livestock is growing sufficient forage, or plant material eaten by grazing livestock. USDA's animal feed program has established four cooperative, union-run forage nurseries, as well as rehabilitated and expanded 16 forage-growing sites operated by the Government of Ethiopia. Together, these operations are producing enough seeds and seedlings of high-yielding, nutritious forages such as elephant grass and alfalfa to feed the livestock of up to 58,000 smallholder farmers.

Bekelech Alemu raises crops and livestock in Ethiopia's Oromia Region. She feeds her dairy cows elephant grass and fodder beets grown from seed acquired through the Bokoji Cooperative, one of the groups supported through USDA's feed program. She says that the surplus feed grown on the cooperative's farm helps keep her cows from going hungry during the dry season.

The program has also enabled nine cooperative unions to start up commercial livestock feed manufacturing enterprises with a combined annual capacity of 10,800 tons of feed and other products that supplement the diets of livestock. These businesses are supported by an online database created to help feed manufacturers figure out the best sources for obtaining the ingredients they put into their products.

In addition, nearly 500 experts employed in the Ethiopian feed industry have received advanced training in feedlots (locations where livestock are fed), dairy and poultry nutrition, and management. This training has contributed to building capacity, as the local partners have gone on to hold additional trainings and pass on their expertise to more than 14,000 smallholder farmers in their home districts.

USDA's Food for Progress grants have also supported the development of livestock-based enterprises that improve marketing

opportunities (e.g., diversification of products to include cheese and butter instead of just raw milk), as well as promote improved business management practices (e.g., using scales to determine the cost of production, purchase and sale of livestock, etc.).

Did you know that livestock is also a [Feed the Future priority in West Africa](#)? Want to learn more about [two new varieties of forage released in Nicaragua](#) to increase meat and milk production? Read on for more!



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Through Feed the Future, local Ethiopian partners have been trained in best practices for managing feedlots, where livestock are fed prior to being sold.